

Department of Defense (DoD)
Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)
Field Advisory Services - *FAS*
Classification Appeal Decision

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| DoD Decision: | Computer Assistant, GS-0335-09 |
| Initial classification: | Computer Specialist, GS-0334-09 |
| Organization: | Air Force Base Civil Engineering Group Engineering Division Resources Flight |
| Date: | July 02, 1998 |

INFORMATION CONSIDERED

This appeal decision is based on information from the following sources:

1. The appellant's letter with attachments.
2. The official position description for the appealed position and the evaluation statement.
3. Statement of job description accuracy signed by the appellant and the supervisor.
4. An organizational chart pertaining to the appealed position.
5. The appellant's latest SF-50.
6. The appellant's latest performance standards.
7. The supervisor's official position description and the evaluation statement.
8. On-site interview with the supervisor and audit with the appellant.

STANDARDS REFERENCED

A. United States Office of Personnel Management Position Classification Standard for Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335, December 1997, HRCD-4.

B. United States Office of Personnel Management Position Classification Standard for Computer Operation Series, GS-332, December 1997, HRCD-4.

C. United States Office of Personnel Management Position Classification Standard for Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, December 1997, HRCD-4.

D. United States Office of Personnel Management Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, December, HRCD-4.

BACKGROUND AND POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant routinely assists engineers, technicians, and other functional specialists by providing advice, direction and management of the Computer Aided Drafting and Design (CADD), Geographic Information System (GIS) computer system (including the 911 Emergency Dispatch System), and the Information Document Management System (IDMS) for the Engineering Division at Xxx Air Force Base. The appellant signed a statement that certified the accuracy of the position description of record and the supervisor certified the accuracy of duties under the supervisor's block on the job description of record.

The appellant believes that she is performing duties which "should be graded minimally as a GS-11." By law, we must make our decision solely by comparing the current duties, responsibilities and the qualifications required to perform them to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S. Code 5106, 5107 and 5112). In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all relevant information furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description of record, W0132.

TITLE AND SERIES DETERMINATION

The appellant's responsibilities in operating, monitoring, and controlling computer operations and identifying and resolving operating problems, are included in the GS-332, Computer Operations Series. Her other duties are similar to work performed in the GS-335, Computer Clerk and Assistant Series and the GS-334, Computer Specialist Series. Some computer assistants perform duties much like those assigned to entry level computer specialists. The distinguishing characteristics as to which series the work should be classified in are the knowledge requirements and the purpose of the work.

To be included in the GS-334 Computer Specialist Series, work requires in-depth knowledge of computer requirements or techniques associated with the development and design of computer systems. This knowledge is required in order to analyze and design the subject matter processes to be automated; select or designate the equipment to be used or, to develop and design data processing systems. This work includes responsibility for major modifications or substantive and extensive changes in the design of the logical steps in the programs being processed; or the initial design and development of new programs and applications. System design and development responsibilities are not vested in the appellant's position; those functions, including authority for substantive systems modifications, are with the Systems Command and other appropriate program managers.

Employees who support or assist other employees who design or use automatic data processing systems applications and products are classified in the GS-335 series. This series includes positions

similar to the appellant's that perform limited phases of computer specialist functions to insure the smooth operation of systems, i.e., that perform primarily technical support work. Such technical support work typically requires knowledge of the scope, contents and purposes of program documentation, knowledge of programming languages (COBOL, FORTRAN PL/1) and job control languages, knowledges or system hardware, and knowledge of internal software routines such as schedulers, reports generators, link, merge or other built in routines. Similar to the appellant's work, employees in this series code programs, write small link, merge or edit programs or work directly from user requests to write modifications to existing programs. We found that the knowledge of engineering related concepts was incidental in the performance of this primary purpose of the position. Consequently, the appellant's position is therefore properly classified in the GS-335 Series, with the title of Computer Assistant.

GRADE LEVEL DETERMINATION

The GS-335 standard is in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. The standard specifies nine standard factors. Each FES occupational standard describes the factor levels applicable to that type of work. A position factor must meet the full intent of a factor level to be credited with that level. If the position exceeds on factor level but fails to meet fully the intent of the next higher factor level, then the lower factor value must be credited. The duties used to set the level for factor one are used for all remaining factors. The points corresponding to the levels are totaled and converted to the grade using the conversion table specified in the standard.

Factor 1. Knowledge required by the Position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that employees must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

Similar to the appellant's work, work at factor level 1-6 requires extensive knowledge of computer equipment, internal computer processes, applications and utility programs and magnetic media. It also requires knowledge of a wide range of analytical and diagnostic methods, procedures and principles. In addition, knowledge is required of some elements of programming, systems analysis, and equipment operations. This work often requires that the employee modify computer programs and operating procedures and take other actions involving analysis and decision making responsibilities. The duties performed by the appellant fully meet factor level 1-6.

Factor level 1-6 is the highest level in the GS-335 standard. Work at factor level 1-7 in the Primary Standard requires development of new methods, approaches, or procedures. The appellant is usually called on to help with specific problems relating to operating or using the system within its intended design parameters. She is not regularly called upon to independently design or independently modify significant aspects of the programs or systems which are devised and directed by higher authority. Therefore, factor level 1-7, is not met.

The appellant is responsible for the operating of the CADD/GIS and the IDMS systems. The work

at factor level 1-6 "encompasses many of the problem solving aspects of computer specialist work concerned with effective program implementation and processing except those requiring programming corrections or equipment repair." The assigned project areas (CADD/GIS and IDMS) are comparatively conventional and specific in nature and do not afford the appellant the opportunity to develop new methods, approaches and procedures to support the crediting of factor level 1-7.

The appellants work on the E911 Emergency Dispatch System, which is in concert with members of the Xxx AFB Fire Department, Medical, Communications Group, and Security Police, is indicative of the appealed position's level of knowledge required. Furthermore, all major automated system planning, implementation, and evaluation at Xxx AFB is the primary responsibility of the Systems Command. Therefore, the appealed position does not meet factor level 1-7 and factor level 1-6 is credited.

Level 1-6, 950 points

Factor 2. Supervisor Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

Controls over the appellant's work clearly exceed factor level 2-3 in the standard where the supervisor provides direction on objectives and priorities for new work, deadlines and deadline changes for new and established work. The employee seeks supervisory assistance and discusses problems related to the work when processing requests appear to exceed system capacity or could have adverse effect on other processing requirements.

Factor level 2-3 is the highest level in the GS-335 standard. The appealed position works independently and fully meets factor level 2-4 in the Primary Standard since the employee, "having developed expertise in the line of work, is responsible for planning and carrying out the assignment, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with others as necessary, and interpreting policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives." The appealed position is credited with factor level 2-4.

Level 2-4, 450 points

Factor 3. Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

The appealed position fully meets factor level 3-3. Available guidelines include off-the-shelf procedures provided by software/hardware vendors, general agency program standards, handbooks, and manuals. Existing documentation is often inadequate and the appellant uses judgment in the interpretation and application of guides. Additionally, judgment is required in adjusting the most appropriate guidelines to fit new processing requirements or developing new methods to accomplish the work. The appealed position is credited with factor level 3-3.

Level 3-3, 275 points

Factor 4. Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The work involves a number of similar but different systems, modules, programs, and equipment. Comparable to factor level 4-3, the appellant performs a variety of related tasks that require differing methods and procedures to operate, install, and maintain computer hardware and software. She decides what is to be done from studying each job order or processing problem situation. She explains system capabilities, limitations and output variations to users and resolves problems for users who encounter system related problems. The appellant must choose a course of action based on the system involved as well as the specific problem or issues (e.g., CADD/GIS, IDMS, etc.), and the data or facts of the specific case/s. Work frequently requires substantial coordination due to the number of different users or interrelation of the processes. The appellant is concerned with the maintenance and operation of the systems and programs at the local level rather than the design or life cycle management of total systems or major parts of total systems.

For complexity, the appealed position fully meets factor level 4-3 but falls short of factor level 4-4 which is distinguished from the previous level by the variety and complexity of the operating systems monitored, the nature and variety of problems encountered and resolved, and the nature of independent decisions made by the appellant. The appellant's decisions are limited by the operational parameters established for the system. She cannot choose different software or hardware or substantively modify software to resolve operating problems. The appealed position is credited with factor level 4-3.

Level 4-3, 150 points

Factor 5. Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, e.g., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The appellant performs duties which resolve a variety of conventional and largely recurring problems, questions, or situations, although solutions are not always covered by established or standardized procedures. The work affects the Civil Engineering Design Program, the Real Property Records, and Xxx's Base Comprehensive Plan. These characteristics and the work illustrations at factor level 5-3 are comparable to the appellant's assignments, e.g., maintaining established applications programs and modifying program contents to provide for new data and output when such changes do not modify the original programming logic and techniques; reviewing, testing, and correcting procedures to resolve processing delays or failures; and explaining to and assisting customers in the application of

system capabilities.

The work does not meet factor level 5-4 which involves analyzing unusual conditions and problems that affect a wide range of agency activities. The appellant's work affects the computer operations of the Yyy Civil Engineering Group, which is characteristic of factor level 5-3. Therefore, the appealed position is credited with factor level 5-3.

Level 5-3, 150 points

Factor 6. Personal Contacts

Factor 6 includes face-to-face contacts and telephone and radio dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The personal contacts that serve as the basis for the level selected under Factor 6 are to be used for selecting a level under Factor 7. Contacts are with persons within and outside the agency, other government agencies, vendors, contractors, local government officials, and occasional contacts with high ranking officials from the County Board of Supervisors. The appealed position fully meets factor level 6-2 but does not meet factor level 6-3 which involves having routine contacts with specialists from other agencies, professional groups, attorneys, or the news media. The appealed position is credited with factor level 6-2.

Level 6-2, 25 points

Factor 7. Purpose of Personal Contacts

The purpose of contacts for the position is similar to Level 7-2, e.g. to coordinate work efforts, solve problems, and provide advice to others in utilizing the CADD/GIS 911 system. The appealed position does not meet factor level 7-3 of the Primary Standard which involves the influencing, motivating, interrogating and controlling or people or groups. The appealed position is credited with factor level 7-2.

Level 7-2 = 50 points

Factor 8. Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and physical exertion involved in the work.

The work is generally sedentary, although there may be some nominal walking or standing for short periods of time, or carrying of light loads of papers, books, reports and the like that require only moderate physical ability and physical stress. The appealed position is credited with factor level 8-1.

Level 8-1, 5 points

Factor 9. Work Environment

The work involves the common risks or discomforts, requiring normal safety precautions typical of offices, meeting rooms, libraries and the like. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. Employees in or adjacent to computer rooms may be within environmentally controlled areas and, although relatively cool, require only normal clothing to compensate for minor discomfort. The appealed position is credited with factor level 9-1

Level 9-1, 5 points

Summary Point Value :

| Factor Level | Points |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1-6 | 950 |
| 2-4 | 450 |
| 3-3 | 275 |
| 4-3 | 150 |
| 5-3 | 150 |
| 6-2 | 25 |
| 7-2 | 50 |
| 8-1 | 5 |
| 9-1 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 2060 |

The grade conversion table on page 2 shows that a point range of 1855 - 2100 converts to grade GS-09.

DECISION

We have determined that the appealed position is correctly classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-09. This decision is a classification certificate that is binding on all administrative certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting offices within the Department of Defense.